



# SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN

Bulletin 01-02

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## Student Application & Transfer Request Information

The Special Needs Scholarship Program (SNSP) allows a student with a disability, who meets certain eligibility requirements, to receive a state-funded scholarship to attend a participating private school. The following information, which is based on Wis. Stat. 115.7915 and Wis. Admin. Code PI 49, is intended to assist the SNSP administrators and designees with processing a student's application and transfer request form. The SNSP applications and transfer requests cannot be accepted by anyone other than the SNSP administrator or designee.

**This bulletin applies to 2019-20 applications received between November 28, 2019 and March 31, 2020. The official application and transfer request forms must be filled out completely, accurately, and legibly with required signatures.** Parents must complete the paper student application form or transfer request available on the [SNSP Student Applications webpage](#). Further information on student eligibility is available in the Initial Student Eligibility Bulletin, Continuing & Transfer Student Eligibility Bulletin, and Residency Bulletin on the [SNSP School Application & Transfer Request Processing webpage](#).

To ensure that each student application or transfer request form includes all required information, the Department strongly recommends that schools use the Student Application checklist and Transfer Request checklist on the [SNSP School Application Processing webpage](#).

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## **Application & Transfer Request Processing**

### ***Application & Transfer Request Receipt***

SNSP schools may accept SNSP applications from July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup> of each school year for that school year. Applications and transfer requests may be accepted at any time during a school year. Applications and transfer requests must be accepted in the order that they are received except for the sibling preference described below.

- An application is considered to be “received” when the SNSP administrator or designee obtains all of the following: (1) the student’s SNSP application; and (2) the required residency documentation.
- A transfer request is considered to be “received” when the SNSP administrator or designee obtains all of the following: (a) a Transfer Request Form; (b) residency documentation; and (c) the student’s most recent IEP or services plan.

Once the school has received all of the documents listed above to be considered “received”, the SNSP administrator or designee must enter the date received in the “for school use only” section.

### ***Sibling Preference***

If a school receives a SNSP student application or transfer request from a sibling of a current student at the school, the school may give the sibling preference over another student applicant. Preference may only be given if:

- The sibling’s application or transfer request is determined eligible prior to the date that the eligibility determination must be made for any student who submitted an earlier application or transfer request; and
- The school has not (a) sent the Individualized Education Program (IEP)/services plan verification email or notification email to the student’s resident school district for any student applicants who submitted an application earlier; or (b) sent the acceptance letter to any applicants who submitted a transfer request earlier.

### ***Eligibility Review***

**Applications:** Within twenty-one (21) days of receiving an application (21 day verification period) the SNSP administrator or designee must determine if the student is eligible using the application checklist items 1-21 and 27, including determining that the parent/guardian (hereafter “parent”) provided the correct residency documentation.

**Transfer Requests:** Within the 21 day verification period the SNSP administrator or designee must determine if the student is eligible using the transfer checklist items 1-26 and 28, including determining that the parent provided the correct residency documentation and a copy of the current IEP/services plan. As part of this process, the SNSP administrator or designee must send an email to the DPI to verify that the student was counted on the previous SNSP pupil count report.

If any documentation provided is not correct, the school may obtain the correct documentation within the 21 day verification period. The date received does not need to be updated if revised documentation is obtained during the 21 day verification period. The date received is based on the initial date the required items are received, even if corrections are later identified. If the correct documentation is not provided during the 21 day verification period, the application or transfer request must be determined ineligible.

### ***Eligibility Notifications and Verifications***

The school must then complete one of the following within the 21 day verification period based on the eligibility determination that is made and if there is space available at the school.

<b>Eligibility Determination</b>	<b>Steps to be Completed During the 21 Day Verification Period After Eligibility is Determined</b>
Ineligible	Send written notification to the parent. The notification must indicate that the student is not eligible for the program and the reason(s) for the ineligibility determination.
Eligible but the school does not have space available	Send written notification to the parent. The notification must indicate that the student has an eligible transfer request or eligible application pending the IEP/services plan verification, but the school does not have space available and indicate the student's place on the waiting list.
Eligible and the school has space available	<p><u>Transfer Request:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send the letter of acceptance to the applicant.</li> </ul> <p><u>Application:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send an email to the Local Education Agency (LEA) that developed the IEP or services plan requesting the LEA send both of the following within five (5) business days: (a) verification that an IEP or services plan was in effect at the time the student applied and (b) a copy of the IEP or services plan if one was in effect. See Appendix A for a sample email that can be sent to the LEA. The list of the public school district special education contacts is available on the <a href="#">Student Application Processing Webpage</a>.</li> <li>• Send an email to the student's resident school district notifying them that, pending the verification that an IEP or services plan is in effect, the student will receive an SNSP scholarship. This can be in the same email as the verification if the LEA and resident school district is the same. See Appendix B for a sample email if the LEA and resident school district are different.</li> </ul>

***Application Processing After IEP/Services Plan Verification (Applications Only)***

Within 7 days of the private school receiving the IEP or services plan from the LEA in response to the private school's verification request, the private school must complete the following:

- Check the box on the application identifying the LEA's response to the IEP/services plan verification. Please note the LEA only sending a copy of the IEP or services plan is not sufficient for this verification. The email must indicate whether or not the student has an IEP or services plan that meets the requirements.
- The SNSP administrator or designee must sign and date the application, as well as insert their printed name.
- Notify the student applicant whether or not they are eligible for the program. If the student is not eligible for the SNSP, the notification must indicate that the student is not eligible for the program and the reason(s) for the ineligibility determination.

If the LEA determines the student does not have an IEP or services plan that is in effect but the parent has documentation indicating that the student does, the parent should contact the LEA directly regarding the discrepancy. If the LEA determines the verification was completed incorrectly prior to the time the letter of denial is required to be sent, the LEA should send a revised verification email with the corrected information. If a revised email is not sent by the LEA to the private school within the 7 days, a letter of denial must be sent out by the private school based on the original email indicating the student is not eligible. If the LEA determines the verification was completed incorrectly after the letter of denial is sent to the student applicant, then the student applicant must submit a new SNSP application to the private school.

***Application & Transfer Request Submission to DPI***

The school must submit all eligible applications and transfer request forms to the DPI by the next upcoming submission deadline using the submission links emailed to SNSP administrators and designees. The submission links are emailed to the SNSP administrators and designees at the beginning of the school year. The submission deadlines are the 2nd Friday in August, the last weekday in August, the 3rd Friday in September, and the 2nd Friday in January. If possible, the applications and transfer requests should not be submitted until the school has determined if the applicant accepted or declined the scholarship.

If the school completed the eligibility determination after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday in January for an application or transfer request, the school must submit the application or transfer request to the DPI by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday in August in the following school year. The school must use the application or transfer request link from the previous school year.

***Agreement of Services to be Provided***

The school and the parent must agree to the services that will be provided to each SNSP student. The document must be signed by the parent and a representative of the school. The document must indicate the date the agreement was made.

The school will indicate if the parent and school have agreed to the services that will be provided on the pupil count report. If the school and parent have not agreed to the services that will be provided, the school will not be eligible for payment for the student. The agreement of services to be provided will be reviewed by the auditor as part of the Enrollment Audit. Once the school and the parent have agreed upon the services to be provided a new agreement is not required unless there is a change in the agreed upon services.

### ***Documentation Retention***

Schools are required to retain all of the following for at least five (5) years from the end of the school year in which the student applies or five (5) years after the student no longer attends the school, whichever occurs later:

- a. A copy of all letters accepting or denying any applications or transfer requests,
- b. All applications,
- c. All transfer request forms, and
- d. All supporting documentation received, including a copy of the IEP/services plan verification from the LEA for applications.

The school must retain this documentation even if the application or transfer request is not accepted or if the student declines a scholarship when offered. The *Comparison of Rights of Students with Disabilities and their Families under State and Federal Special Education Law and under the Wisconsin Special Needs Scholarship Program*, which is included with the application and transfer request does not need to be retained.

## **Corrections to Application & Transfer Request Information**

### ***Student Application & Transfer Request Form Corrections***

Any corrections to the application or transfer request form are to be made with a “~~strike through line~~” and initialed by the SNSP administrator or designee. The school must have written documentation to support the change. Any applications or transfer requests corrected with “white-out” will be ineligible for payment. **The SNSP administrator/designee and parent may not make the following changes to an application after the school sends the LEA the IEP/services plan verification email or the email to the resident school district; or to a transfer request after the school sends a letter of acceptance or denial to the parent:**

- Adding the parent signature and/or date signed to the application, transfer request form, or Alternative Residency Form.
- Adding the date received.
- Any changes that result in:
  - The application being ineligible due to residency or status of the IEP or services plan, or
  - The transfer request being ineligible due to residency, the student not being continuously enrolled in the SNSP, or the student having been determined to no longer have a disability through an IEP reevaluation.

***Grade Changes***

Grade changes must be done by the school while completing the Preliminary Enrollment Report, the 3rd Friday in September Count report, or the 2nd Friday in January Count report. If any grade changes are missed in the count reports, the school must notify the auditor of the required change. The auditor will include the correction in the September or January Enrollment Audit.

***Other Application or Transfer Request Information Changes***

If the school determines that any other information submitted to the department was incorrect, the school must notify the school's independent auditor of the required change. The auditor will include the correction in the September or January Enrollment Audit.

**Appendix A: IEP/Services Plan LEA Verification Request Email**

The following is a sample email that can be sent to the LEA that developed the IEP or services plan requesting verification that an applicant has an IEP or services plan in effect at the time the student applied to the SNSP.

Dear <LEA contact first name> <LEA contact last name>,

This email is to notify you that the following student has been found eligible by <private school name> to participate in the Special Needs Scholarship Program (SNSP), pending verification that the student had an individualized services program (IEP) or services plan that had been developed and was being implemented as of <date application received>. The application for this student was received on <date application received>.

Student Name: <student first name> <student last name>

Student Date of Birth: <student date of birth>

The SNSP application indicates that he/she <“resides in your district” or “does not reside in your district, but that your LEA developed the IEP or services plan”>.

Please reply to this email and include the following within five (5) business days of receiving this email:

- 1) Indicate which of the following is true as of <date application received>:
  - a. The student had an IEP that was in effect.
  - b. The student had a services plan that was in effect.
  - c. The LEA has no record of an IEP or services plan for this student that was in effect.
- 2) If the student had an IEP or services plan that met the requirement, send a copy of the IEP or services plan.

If you have any questions, please reply to this email or call <school phone number>.

Thank you,

<Private School SNSP Administrator or Designee>



**Appendix B: Resident School District Notification of Eligible SNSP Student**

SNSP schools are required to send an email to the resident school district notifying them that, pending the verification that an IEP or services plan is in effect, a student will receive a SNSP scholarship. If the LEA that developed the IEP or services plan is the resident school district, only the email in Appendix A needs to be sent. If a different LEA developed the IEP or services plan, the email below or a similar communication must be sent to the resident school district.

Dear <resident school district contact first name> <resident school district contact last name>,

This email is to notify you that the following student has been found eligible by <private school name> to participate in the Special Needs Scholarship Program (SNSP), pending verification that the student had an individualized education program (IEP) or services plan that had been developed and was being implemented as of <date application received>.

Student Name: <student first name> <student last name>

Student Date of Birth: <student date of birth>

Based on the SNSP application, a different Local Education Agency (LEA) developed the student's IEP or services plan. The email requesting verification that there was an IEP or services plan in effect that met the requirement has been sent to this LEA.

If you have any questions, please reply to this email or call <school phone number>.

Thank you,

<Private School SNSP Administrator or Designee>

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### ***Q1. What information do I need to submit to the DPI for applications and transfer requests?***

Schools complete the initial eligibility determination for applications and transfer requests. The school must submit all eligible applications and transfer request forms to the DPI by the next upcoming submission deadline using the submission links emailed to SNSP administrators and designees. The submission deadlines are the 2nd Friday in August, the last weekday in August, the 3rd Friday in September, and the 2nd Friday in January. If possible, the applications and transfer requests should not be submitted until the school has determined if the applicant accepted or declined the scholarship.

### ***Q2. If the private school already has a copy of the IEP or services plan, does the private school still need to send the IEP/services plan verification email to the LEA and get an email back from the LEA indicating the pupil had an IEP/services plan that met the SNSP requirements?***

Yes. Even if the private school has a copy of an IEP or services plan on file or previously received a copy from the LEA or parent, it must send the IEP or services plan verification email and receive: (a) verification that an IEP or services plan was in effect at the time the student applied and (b) a copy of the IEP or services plan if one was in effect. The LEA providing this in response to the verification request is the process by which the LEA confirms the student has an IEP or services plan in effect on the date the application was received.

### ***Q3. If the last IEP team or services plan evaluation or reevaluation that makes the student eligible for the SNSP was waived, what date should be inserted on the application as the date of the last IEP team or services plan evaluation or reevaluation?***

The date of the last IEP team or services plan evaluation or reevaluation on the application should be the date of the waiver agreement.

### ***Q4. The date of the last evaluation/reevaluation on the application does not appear correct based on the IEP or services plan. How should I proceed?***

If you are unsure whether the date of the last IEP team or services plan evaluation or reevaluation is correct, the school should consider reaching out to the LEA that developed the IEP or services plan to confirm the correct date. The date may be unclear from the IEP/services plan. Confirming this date is correct will ensure the school has the correct next required reevaluation date for SNSP eligibility purposes. If a different date is provided than the date on the application, the paper application must be corrected. In order to correct the date, the incorrect date must be struck through, the correct date written in, and the SNSP administrator or designee must initial the change.

***Q5. If I have a SNSP waiting list and a SNSP scholarship comes available, do I need to offer the scholarship?***

No. However, if you choose to offer the scholarship, you must offer the scholarship to the next student on the waiting list.

***Q6. If I specify the number of scholarships available for 1-12 but only have a certain number of scholarships available in a particular grade, can I restrict the number of scholarships for a particular grade?***

You may internally designate the number of scholarships you have available for a particular grade. If you have indicated that you have a grade available, you must have at least one scholarship available in that grade. If a SNSP scholarship opens up in a grade that there is a waiting list for and the school chooses to fill the available scholarship from the waiting list, the school must offer the scholarships in the order of the waiting list.